



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Pertussis Outbreak

**East Wenatchee, WA**—Chelan-Douglas Health District (CDHD) has received confirmation of a pertussis outbreak circulating at a local school. To date there are at least 4 cases and CDHD is following up with several other suspected cases.

[Pertussis](#) (whooping cough) is a well-known and serious respiratory illness caused by the bacteria *Bordetella pertussis*. Whooping cough spreads very easily by coughing and sneezing. It begins with cold-like symptoms and develops into a bad cough. Coughing spells can be severe, sometimes ending in gagging or vomiting. Some kids also may have a high-pitched “whoop” after they cough, which is how the disease got its common name (although infants may not cough at all, and some teens and adults don’t have a “whoop” after they cough). People that have been vaccinated for pertussis may have milder symptoms, but it is important to know that they can still get and transmit pertussis. Complications of pertussis include pneumonia, syncope (passing out), seizures, apnea (stopping breathing) and death. These severe complications are most common in infants, with half of infected infants requiring hospitalization. Pertussis infection during pregnancy can affect the fetus and result in newborn complications.

Person to person spread of pertussis occurs through large respiratory droplets, and is most likely among people that live together or people who spend time together indoors. Wearing medical-grade surgical masks can prevent the spread of droplets and protect individuals from passing on pertussis and decrease the risk of contracting pertussis.

The most effective preventive measure against pertussis infection, transmission and complications is routine [vaccination](#).

Antibiotics are used in pertussis cases to treat the illness, avoid progression of the disease and complications, decrease transmission and prevent the onset of illness after exposure. There are tests available for Pertussis. However, a negative test does not mean a person should stop the treatment. The full prescription should be taken as directed by your care provider. Anybody with the following should see a healthcare provider:

1. Any of the symptoms mentioned above
2. Respiratory symptoms after exposure to pertussis
3. Contact with a person with pertussis

4. Any conditions which put the person at high risk (less than one year or pregnant)
5. Exposure to pertussis and contact with high-risk individuals

CDHD recommends practicing good respiratory hygiene:

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Throw away used tissues in the wastebasket right away.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you have been exposed to Pertussis.
- Anyone who is not up to date on their pertussis vaccination schedule seek care with their healthcare provider to update their immunization status.
- If you are experiencing respiratory illness symptoms, stay home for 24 hours and seek healthcare evaluation if symptoms do not improve.

Chelan-Douglas Health District is working closely with school officials, local healthcare providers and the Washington State Department of Health to rapidly respond, monitor and assist in care of affected individuals and their families. Prevention of severe illness among those most vulnerable to pertussis is our highest priority.

Resources:

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[Washington State Department of Health](#)

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